



**David McCumber**

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Good Morning, Chairperson Custer and members of the Local Government Committee.

It's an honor to speak to you here today.

My name is David McCumber and I have lived in Butte for the past seven years plus. For most of that time I've served as the editor of The Montana Standard, which Lee Enterprises bought in 1959 from the Anaconda Copper Mining Company. Now, I'm Lee's director of local news for the Western United States, including our five newspapers in Montana, and still based in Butte.

You've just heard what I considered an incredibly eloquent and informative statement from Melody Martinsen about weekly newspapers' rightful opposition to PD 12 and PD7. I'll try not to be too repetitive but I'd like to add some perspective from the state's daily newspapers.

First: I need to tell you that newspapers in Montana are not going away. More people are reading our content than ever before.

There's a reason for that. Along with our fellow weekly publications, we dailies are the watchdogs of state, county and local government in Montana. That's nothing new – a tour through the archives of the Standard, the Missoulian, the Billings Gazette, the Helena Independent Record and our fellow dailies in Bozeman, Great Falls and Kalispell will show you that ever since Montana has been a state, newspapers have filled that role. And we are more effective -- and depended upon -- in that role than ever before. Over the last few years, as you know, Lee Montana Newspapers have invested in a four-person Montana State News Bureau, which serves all of our newspapers, and also other dailies in the state who use our content, either by arrangement with us or through the Associated Press. Daily newspapers remain the leading providers of government news in the state, and it's not even close. Indeed, we know that approximately 80 percent of Montanans depend on newspapers as a source of local news. Our pages and pixels are where Montanans come for their news, and there's no other place that could possibly be as effective in reaching those interested in public notices.

When something is published in our newspapers, you could look it up. Literally. Our print pages – all of them – from today back more than 140 years, can be read and searched online.

Publication in our newspapers is accepted as prima facie evidence of legal notice by the state's courts. Our county clerks and recorders across the state will tell you that we are doing an effective job of presenting notices, and they will also tell you that we are dependable and good to work with.

I'm honored to serve currently on the state Board of County Printing, and I can personally attest to the fact that we haven't raised prices in more than five years. During that time, we haven't even met to discuss such a thing.

Remember, we publish notices digitally as well as in print already – this is nothing new to us. We're by far the most dependable, thorough and widely read media in the state. And for those 140-plus years, people have been used to seeing public notices in the newspaper and in recent years on our web sites. A 140-year habit is tough to break and there's no reason for the Legislature to impose a new system on Montanans. Such a move would be expensive, uncertain, bureaucracy-growing and less effective than our current system.

There's no reason to send readers to two separate places to get notices, and there's no good reason to send them anywhere but where they're used to reading those notices – in the pages and on the websites of Montana's newspapers.